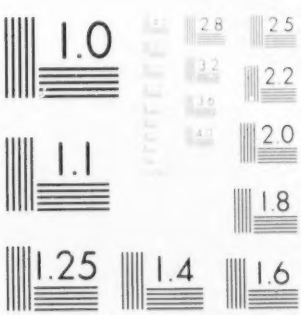

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ABSTRACT

This newsletter features an essay, "Anticipatory Democracy and Citizen Involvement: Strategies for Communication Education in the Future," which discusses strategies for improving citizen involvement and examines ways in which educators can prepare students for constructive citizen involvement. Notes on Speech Communication Association meetings scheduled for late 1977, a statement of policies and principles of the Speech Communication Association Committee on Accountability and Responsibility in Governmental Communication, and a "Credo for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society" are included. (GW)

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FREEDOM OF SPEECH NEWSLETTER
Michael P. Kelley, Editor
Harry Sharp, Associate Editor

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Special Thanks to the Department of Speech Communication, California State University, Los Angeles for making possible the duplicating and mailing of this issue of the Newsletter.

How must the educator respond to this national "crisis in confidence?" What strategies can the educator implement to prepare the student for citizen involvement and participation?

ANTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT: STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION EDUCATION IN THE FUTURE

by

Joyce Flory

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LACK OF FUTURE CONSCIOUSNESS AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Toffler believes that contemporary democratic political systems currently face two problems (1) lack of future consciousness and (2) lack of citizen participation. Unequipped to anticipate the assets and liabilities of the future, citizens stumble from crisis to crisis. This lack of "anticipatory" skill is as common in a hospital or union as it is in an educational institution. The consequences of this "future blindness" are manifest in a wide range of problems, particularly inflation, energy and the ecological crisis. Moreover, the society is plagued by citizen alienation and powerlessness. Convinced that leaders care little for their ideas, citizens feel increasingly excluded from the decision-making process.[1]

The Senate Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations reinforces Toffler's view in its report, Confidence and Concern: Citizens View American Government:

> (1) Certainly the most striking verdict rendered . . . by the American people and disputed by their leaders is a negative one . . . For the first time since June, 1968, the circumscribed minority of citizens who thought something was 'deeply wrong' with their country has become a national majority, embracing men and women from coast to coast and including most of the middle-range of working Americans. And for the first time in the 10 years of opinion sampling by the Harris Survey, the growing trend of public opinion toward disenchantment with government swept more than half of all Americans with it . . .
> (2) This 'crisis of confidence' spans the range of society's institutions, leaving only doctors and trash collectors in command of majority respect . . .
> (3) A plurality (45% of the people said that the 'quality of life' in America had deteriorated over the last decade, while 35% thought it had improved, and 15% saw no change.[2]

How must the educator respond to this national "crisis in confidence?" What strategies can the educator implement to prepare the student for citizen involvement and participation? The National Educational Association's subcommittee on "America's Educational Future: 1976-2001" suggests that students of the future possess the following skills:[3]

(1) knowledge of the realities of the present.

(2) an awareness of alternative solutions.
(3) an understanding of consequences that might accompany these options.
(4) development of insight as to wise choices.
(5) ability to implement the examined ideas, policies and programs.

The problem for educators is a dual one: (1) How can we instill both in ourselves and in our students a "future consciousness?" (2) How can we give our students the practical skills necessary for participation and involvement in the society of the future?

The techniques and strategies of "anticipatory democracy" suggest a solution to both of these critical questions. The term "anticipatory" suggests the need for instruction in the techniques of forecasting, prediction, and polling of public opinion. The term "democracy" suggests the need for instruction in how to both exploit the existing channels of popular participation and create new channels while enhancing the amount and quality of feedback.

This paper will attempt to (1) describe the "anticipatory democracy" movement as it has grown throughout this country, and (2) suggest instructional strategies which might be implemented in the classroom both to increase future consciousness and enhance students' future participation and involvement in the society.

THE ANTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

State-wide goals programs grew out of the need of citizens to find more effective means of verbalizing social, economic, and environmental goals and implementing these goals into both long-range plans and effective legislation.[4] With the involvementof citizens, various educational groups, state conferences, executive committees, and state commissions have pursued three broad goals: (1) the solicitation of new information for use in future decision-making, (2) the creation of alternative futures, and (3) the communication of recommendations to both legislators and policy-makers. Such groups have probably experienced the greatest success in the education of citizens about state problems, the projection of alternatives in specific areas, and the development of goals for legislative action.

One of the more successful anticipatory democracy movements has been Alternatives for Washington.[5] A 150 person task force initially generated new information about alternatives for the state. 1500 persons participated in regional conferences reviewing the findings of the task force. 2400 people participated in a Delphi poll on "Events, Trends, and Developments, Internal and External to the State." With the information collected, the task force identified 11 alternative futures for the state.

(1) Agricultural Washington (23% favored)
(2) Balanced Washington (agricultural and internal trade development (20% approved)
(3) Other alternatives included Rural Renaissance (3.7%), Urban Washington (1.1%), the Pacific Portal (6%), Scientific and Technical Washington (8%), Post-Industrial Washington (2.2%), People Priorities (10%), The Whole Person (4.9%), and Washington "Imperative" (5.1%).[6]

Through an effective media campaign and a unique call-in program, over

60,000 people participated in the program, with 100,000 to 200,000 persons watching programs on public television. The AFW statements most directly related to the concerns of persons in communications are in the Communications Committee Report. This report details (1) a communications growth policy, and (2) the effects of achieving full employment and moderate economic growth on communications.

Although Governor Evans experienced considerable difficulty in turning citizen support into legislation, the HAWAII 2000 project circumvented many problems by initially acquiring state support for its goals program. The initiator of the program, George Chaplin, used the program as a testing ground for citizen involvement in forecasting and goal-setting. Especially relevant to those of us in communication was Hawaii's desire to develop a televote system to allow for the direct expression of opinions on public issues and the development of curricular programs explaining alternative futures for integration in the elementary and secondary curriculum.[7]

Yet another successful approach using communication resources was implemented by Iowa 2000[8] group, a state-wide public education and goal-setting program. The local and regional task forces utilized both an hour-long television show during prime time and a door-to-door newspaper questionnaire to solicit the views of Iowans on their future. Over 50,000 Iowans participated in the program and although the program lacked effective strategies to communicate citizen input to policy-makers, a state-wide conference led to the appointment of a 17-person state committee to investigate strategies for increased citizen involvement in the project.

The Commission on Minnesota's Future avoided many problems encountered by the Iowa 2000 by viewing one of its major missions as the education of legislators. Through a three-day briefing session, "Minnesota Horizons," and through the broadcast of the program on public television throughout the state, legislators learned of the major issues cited by the commission for future legislative consideration.[9] A variety of other programs continue to exist throughout the country.[10] The mixed success of such programs suggests the need for support and involvement of the governor, legislators, and state bureaucracies. It further suggests the need for participation by citizens representing a wide spectrum of the population.

STRATEGIES OF CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The anticipatory democracy movement in states and cities remains only one aspect of the citizen involvement movement. Social planner, Leon Kumore has outlined the nature to the citizen participation movements.

(1) Citizen participation is an organized activity designed as part of a public program.
(2) The program is designed for the participation by people and groups of people who are likely to benefit or be otherwise affected by a decision to be made by public authority.
(3) The participants have a direct and well-defined role in controlling or influencing decision-making processes. In some cases the entire decision-making might be left entirely in the hands of the participants. In other groups, it may be in the hands of several groups of people, including politicians, civil servants, experts, as well as citizen participants.

(4) It is interaction between the citizen participants, the civil servants and experts.
(5) It is a method of achieving intelligent "discussion of issues, resolution of differences and/or disagreement based on rationality and principle with respect for differing opinions and without fear or suspicion."[11]

In his book, Citizens Participate: An Action Guide for Public Issues, Desmond Connor stresses the nature and quality of constructive citizen involvement. He lists the following characteristics:

(1) Active listening to attitudes, goals, and suggestions of citizens.
(2) Availability of opportunities to make positive contributions.
(3) Deeper understanding of the human and physical environment.
(4) Positive identification of opposing opinions and use of cooperative strategies.
(5) Strengthening of relationships between officials and citizens; development of an attitude of mutual trust.

While Connor disparages some past citizen participation programs for their use of public relations, secrecy, and confrontative techniques, he nevertheless believes that citizen participation programs benefit from citizen's expertise and knowledge of the area and work to decrease feelings of alienation, futility, powerlessness.[12]

Certainly people trained in communications already possess many of the skills necessary for the planning phase of an effective citizen action program: recruitment, collection of data, development of alternative solutions, and decision-making. Communications specialists could also implement a parallel participative program by utilizing their skills in information collection, education, determination of preferences, and decision-making.

The proposed goals outlined by the Goals for Dalls project suggest the potential contribution of speech communication scholars:

(1) Development of a plan to maximize involvement and encourage participation of diverse groups and individuals in planning and decision-making.
(2) Persuasion of the media and other institutions that present issues to the public to report these issues clearly and without bias, and, where possible, in a second language.
(3) Encouragement and aid to organizations in teaching citizens problem-solving techniques for effective participation in planning and decision-making.
(4) The development of a system to disseminate information about community issues and programs so that citizens could be involved in planning and decision-making.
(5) Aiding social and business institutions to affect their own lives through involvement in institutional decision-making.
(6) Creation of a program to develop understanding about institutional decision-making.
(7) The creation of an "action center" within the library system to allow citizens access to the information necessary to make decisions.

(8) The development of neighborhood discussion groups for exchange of views and dissemination of issues.
(9) Systematic review of progress and the achievement of goals.
(10) Design and redesign of strategies to maximum citizen involvement for the fulfillment of each goal.
(11) Participation by higher education in the development program of a post-graduate academic study for the creation of scientific yet practical strategies for citizen goal setting and participation.

Certainly, the speech communication profession could participate on any of these levels. In the following sections, the paper examines a variety of particular strategies which have experienced success throughout the country.

A. Participation in Goals Programs

Certainly the goals programs already discussed could benefit from the participation of professionals in communication. Scholars could aid in the recruitment of teams to develop desirable goals, in the submission of these goals to an expanded audience, and in the communication of citizen input to legislators and policy-makers. Communication educators could also work to extend the concept of the Community Action Program and teach citizens how to organize, maintain, and run a board or committee structure on the local level.

B. Public Hearings

In the past, the public hearing has attracted criticism due to its focus on trivial formalities, its inefficiency, and the defensiveness of public officials. Persons in communication education could aid both citizens and officials in learning more efficient leadership techniques. Citizen's Information Service of Illinois, for example, regularly conducts both leadership training classes and practical politics courses with great success.[14]

C. Training of City and School Ombudsmen

In the future, ombudsmen will increasingly function as citizen's representatives on a school and city-wide level. Cities like Wichita have experienced considerable success in their use of school ombudsmen. Moreover, the Better Business Bureau has for half a century provided a mechanism by which citizens register their grievances against a particular business.[15] Increasingly, consumer action organizations will continue to develop more sophisticated grievance procedures.[16]

Communication educators can provide a valuable service by training their students in grievance procedures and devising new and more sophisticated means for citizens to register their complaints and achieve satisfaction.[17] Certainly, communication educators can implement and extend upon the tool of "citizen evaluators" used by Nader's public interest research groups.

D. Surveys and Polling

Surely, persons in the profession might educate students in the design, distribution, and processing of surveys. The success of such surveys is clearly demonstrated in the above section on "anticipatory democracy." Stu-

dents could learn the techniques of conducting standard telephone and written surveys to elicit citizen concerns. Moreover, experimentalists might utilize the balloting system initially developed by IBM.

E. The Development of Community Resource Centers and Information and Referral Services

Communication educators could aid in the development of resource centers in neighborhoods or districts. Possibly staffed with student personnel these centers could both disseminate and solicit information. A single center might gradually evolve into a coordinated network of centers.

In addition to developing resource centers, many cities now provide information and referral services through 24 hour hot lines or through facilities constructed libraries or centrally-located public buildings. The case for such centers has been illustrated many times.[18]

F. Media Usage

Those in the communication profession could assist in the development of effective media feedback programs. Citizens could be educated in production skills which would allow them to dramatize and communicate through cable and problems of their community.[19]

Moreover, communication schools could implement already available technology to create more effective means of problem-solving, decision-making, and information-sharing. Current technology already includes a voting apparatus which displays instantly conference responses to a question, two-way cable TV, and computer conferencing.[20]

G. Monitoring

Increasingly, citizens will require skills necessary to monitor federal, state, and local agencies. A typical effort in the area of monitoring is the PEER project. The Project in Equal Education Rights. A projec of the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, the PEER began to assess the efforts of HEW to carry out Title IX regulations. Since HEW works out of ten regional offices throughout the country, PEER organized teams of local volunteers to monitor Title IX enforcement. Dealing with both open and closed cases, PEER assessed the efficiency of the Office of Civil Rights in communicating to complainants, to other regional offices, and to fellow workers. The public recognition received by PEER will assuredly lead to monitoring projects of other government agencies.[21]

A related monitoring project in Illinois is the on-going Illinois Court Watching Project whose mission it has been to observe proceedings and record data on misdemeanor and felony prosecutions. Since 1974 this project attempted to identify problems in the court from the viewpoint of the citizen. Monitors described in writing how judges, baliffs, and clerks treated defendents. In addition, monitors noted the adequacy of procedures and facilities, catalogued reasons for delay and cited incidences of victimless crime. Such monitoring of courts is an important aspect of the relatively new discipline of legal argumentation and demands the attention of those in communication.[22]

H. Legislative Research

Although students remain cynical about the effectiveness of written com-

munication to state and national legislatures, both Citizens Information Service and League of Women Voters have experienced positive results in instructing citizens of all economic and social levels in the skills of research on current legislation and past voting records and written communication to legislators.[23]

The preceding list only provides a sampling of the educational strategies which could be used to develop a future consciousness in ourselves and in our students.[24] To create awareness of present realities, to help develop alternatives, to build an understanding of consequences, to create an insight into choices, and to guide students in the construction of strategies to implement their choices -- these will be the goals of education for the future. Certainly the speech communication discipline can lend its skills to the development of innovative academic and community programs to help facilitate these goals.

Footnotes:

1. Alvin Toffler, "What is Anticipatory Democracy?" The Futurist, October, 1975, 224-229. See also Milton Kotler, "New Life for American Politics." The Nation, October 30, 1976, 429-431.
2. Cited in Alden Lind, "The Future of Citizen Involvement." The Futurist, December, 1975, 316.
3. Harold G. Shane, "America's Educational Futures, 1976-2001: The Views of 50 Distinguished World Citizens and Educators," The Futurist, October, 1976, 252-257. For further information, see Today's Education, September-October, 1976. See also Harold G. Shane, The Educational Significance of the Future. Bloomington, Indiana; Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. 1973.
4. David Baker, "Anticipatory Democracy," The Futurist, October, 1976, 262-271. For additional information contact Mr. Baker at the Population Institute, 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D. C. 20012. See also the March-April World Future Society Bulletin, available for $2.00 for World Future Society Book Service, 4916 St. Elmo Avenue, Washington, D. C. 20014.
5. "Alternatives for Washington: Cost/Trade-Off Studies," "Alternatives for Washington: Program History," "Alternatives for Washington Program: Questions and Answers," "Results of Alternatives for Washington Surveys," unpublished manuscripts published by Alternatives for Washington, 312 First Avenue North, Seattle, Washington, 98109.
6. See Washington State Magazine, March, 1975. See also The Best Game in Town, a newspaper insert published by Alternatives for Washington for a more specific description of the 11 alternative futures. The interested educator should consult Futures Conditional, volume, three, number two, a publication of the Northwest Regional Foundation, P.O. Box 5296, Spokane, WA 99205.
7. "Hawaii 2000," "Report to the Governor and Legislature: State of Hawaii, December, 1975." "Chapter 22: Commission on the Year 2000" unpublished manuscripts provided by Commission on the Year 2000, c/o Gerald A. Sumida, Chairperson, P.O. Box 6516, Honolulu, Hawaii 96809.
8. Information on the Iowa 2000 program is available from Penny K. Davidsen, Iowa 2000 Program, c.o Institute of Public Affairs, the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 55543.

9. Complete texts of all Minnesota Horizons presentations may be obtained by writing to: Minnesota Horizons, 101 Capitol Square Building, St. Paul, MN 55101. Audio casettes of the entire Minnesota Horizons symposium may be obtained by writing to Audio-Visual Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455.
10. Additional publications are available from the following organizations: (1) California Tomorrow, Monadnock Building, 681 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94105, (2) Vermont Tomorrow, 5 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05602, (3) Massachusetts Tomorrow, 61 Chestnut Street, West Newton, MA 02165, (4) Regional Plan Association, 235 East 45th Street, New York, NY 10017, (5) Goals for Dallas, 825 One Main Place, Dallas, Texas 75250.
11. Quoted in Lind, 318. Leon Kumore is president of Leon Kumore Social Planning Limited, Suite 650, 86 Bloor Street West, Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada. Comments originally appeared in Constructive Citizen Participation, a quarterly newsletter published by Development Press, Box 1016, Oakville, Ontario.
12. See Desmond M. Connor. Citizens Participate: An Action Guide for Public Issues, Oakville, Ontario, Canada, Development Press, 1974.
13. The newspaper survey, "Who Says Nobody Cares What You Think?" is available from Goals for Dallas, 825 One Main Place, Dallas, Texas 75250. Other proposed goals are presented in the areas of: continuing education, cultural activities, design of the city, economy, elementary and secondary education, energy, environment, government, health, higher education, housing, public safety, quality of the citizenry recreation and legal time, social services, and transportation.
14. Other brochures available include "Leader's Guide for Workshops on Effective Organization," "Tips, Planning and Conducting a Candidates Meeting." Brochures are available from Citizens Information Service of Illinois, 67 East Madison Street, Chicago, IL 60603.
15. Information on the mediation and arbitration process practiced by the BBB is available from Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., 1150 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.
16. Information about grievance procedures in the large appliance field is available from MACAP, Major Appliance consumer action panel, 20 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606.
17. A number of recently published books attempt to educate the consumer in grievance procedures: Marvin L. Bittinger, The Consumer Survival Book, Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1976, and John Dorfman, A Consumer's Arsenal, New York: Praeger, 1976.
18. Alfred J. Kahn, Neighborhood Information Centers: A Study and Some Proposals. New York, Columbia School of Social Work, 1966.
19. For a more detailed discussion of public access issues see Andrew O. Shapiro, Media Access. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976. For additional information on media-related citizen involvement efforts, consult the following organizations: (1) National Association for Better Broadcasting, 2315 Westwood Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90064, (2) Action for Children's Television, 46 Austin Street, Newtonville, MA 02160, (3) Public Media Center, 2751 Hyde Street, San Francisco, CA 94109, (4) National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20036, (5) Access, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 415, Washington, D.C. 20036, (6) Accuracy in Media, 777 14th Street, N.W., Suite 427, Washington, D.C. 20015, (7) Office of Communication, United Church of Christ, 289 Park Avenue, South, New York NY 10010, (8) National

Black Media Coalition, 2027 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, (9) Citizens Communication Center, 1914 Sunderland Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. For additional information on practical media usage, see LWVUS, Pub #484, Getting Into Print, and LWVUS, Pub #586, Breaking Into Broadcasting.

20. For a further discussion of computer conferencing see the June and August, 1975, issues of The Futurist.
21. Information on the PEER project is available from PEER, 1029 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20005, Monitoring has been particularly active in the area of open housing. See League of Women Voters of the U.S., 1930 M. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. For information on the monitoring process within schools, see League of Women Voters Education Fund, Know Your Schools, mailed from LWVUS, Pub. #343, $1.00.
22. How to Watch A Court: Parts I and II is available from the League of Women Voters of Illinois, 67 East Madison Street, Chicago, IL 60603. For a more explicit discussion of lobbying procedures, particularly as they have been practiced in the Illinois General Assembly, see "When Citizens Lobby: A Manual for Citizen Action in the Illinois General Assembly," available from the League of Women Voters of Illinois, 67 East Madison, Chicago, IL 60603, $1.00. See Glen E. Mills, "Legal Argumentation: Research and Teaching," Western Speech Communication, XL (Spring, 1976), 83-90.
23. The League of Women Voters of the U.S. (1730 M. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036) has developed a comprehensive booklet which outlines a legislative campaign, "Making an Issue of It: The Campaign Handbook." For information on citizen involvement strategies on a specific issue, see "Safe Drinking Water For All: What Can You Do?" and "So You'd Like To Do Something About Water Pollution?" For a discussion of various successful tactics in stimulating political participation, monitoring and electoral process, and communicating through the media, see LWVUS, Pub. #485, 60¢. For a simple discussion of strategies of community analysis, and goals assessment, see "The Politics of Change," available from LWVUS, Pub. #107, 35¢.
24. These and other strategies are discussed in Draper L. Kauffman, Jr., Teaching The Future: A Guide To Future Oriented Education. Palm Springs: ETC, 1976. For additional information on educational futures, see Richard W. Hostrop, ed., Foundations of Futurology in Education. Palm Springs, ETC, 1973; Edward A. Sullivan, The Future: Human Ecology and Education. Palm Springs: ETC, 1974; Richard W. Hostrop, Education . . . . Beyond Tomorrow, Palm Springs: ETC, 1974.

Your announcement could have filled this space! Send news or notes to Michael P. Kelley, Editor; Freedom of Speech Newletter; Department of Speech Communication; California State University, Los Angeles; Los Angeles, CA 90032.

SCA notes

Dr. Richard L. Johannesen, Chairperson of the Speech Communication Association's Committee on Accountability and Responsibility in Governmental Communication reports the following SCA information in the Freedom of Speech area: 1) two convention programs at the SCA convention of December, 1977 in the area of Freedom of Speech, 2) a "Statement of Committee Policies and Principles" and 3) the SCA CREDO for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society.

1. SCA Committee on Accountability and Responsibility in Governmental Communication: SCA Convention Programs in Washington, D.C., December 1-4, 1977, Sheraton Park Hotel.

"TOWARD ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN GOVERNMENTAL COMMUNICATION"

Chairperson: Richard L. Johannesen, Northern Illinois University

Participants: Wilson P. Dizard, Chief of Planning and Program Advisory Staff, Office of Policy and Plans, U.S. Information Agency
William Ragan, former U.S. Civil Service Commission Chief of Public Affairs and current Director of the National Association of Governmental Communicators
Georgianna Rathbun, Vice-President for Editorial Policy, Common Cause
Harry L. Selden, Vice Chairman, Fair Campaign Practices Commission

"In this post-Watergate era, matters of accountability and responsibility in governmental communication still are much in the forefront of public consciousness. On this program representatives from federal governmental agencies and from citizen watch-dog organizations discuss what they and/or their organization believe should be standards (criteria) for accountability and responsibility in governmental communication."

Time: Saturday, December 3, 1977, 4:10-5:30 pm

"TOWARD A LOGIC OF VALUES FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL COMMUNICATION"

Chairperson and Respondent: Lloyd F. Bitzer, University of Wisconsin at Madison

Participants: Douglas Ehninger, University of Iowa, "Responsibility in Governmental Communication: A Rule-Governed Approach"
Walter R. Fisher, University of Southern California, "Toward a 'Logic' of 'Good Reasons'."

"This program explores ways to assess the weight of values in rhetorical discourse. The underlying assumption is that rhetorical discourse is as laden with values as with reasons; yet, there is no adequate system present for the assessment of values as there is for the consideration of reasons. Indeed, the adequacy of contemporary (and traditional) ways of weighing reasons is under serious question. Given the major conceptions of rhetoric from Burke to Perelman, it is noteworthy that none of them provide standards or criteria for determining how one set of 'good reasons' is better than any other.

Time: Saturday, December 3, 1977, 9:00-10:20 am

2. Speech Communication Association

SCA Committee on Accountability and Responsibility in Governmental Communication

Statement of Committee Policies and Principles

PROBLEM: Political decision-makers are most reliably guided by an informed and interested constituency. Frequently, however, those entrusted with the responsibility resist or restrict the dissemination of new information. While the motives for such resistance are varied, the common assumption is that new information undermines public order and predictability, and--by extension--the stability of the political regime. The public itself shares complicity in this process; for it too may resist unsettling or confusing information. We assume that all participants in the political communication process should be responsible for their choices and conduct, and further, that we--as members of the SCA and the public--are obliged to hold public representatives accountable for their failure to act responsibly.

The basis for our commitments can be found in the assumptions of rhetorical and communication theory as well as the tenets of liberal democracy. These assumptions and tenets are:

1) An informed public decision is more reliable than an uninformed public decision.

2) A government unchecked by reasoned controversy is dangerous to the public interest.

3) All public advocacy, by definition, undertakes the responsibility to offer reasons as justification for popular support. In short, the public consciousness needs to be informed, if it is to be enlisted in responsible political action. And freedom to reasonably support or dissent from public policy decisions is only as extensive as the freedom of knowledge itself.

This Committee considers the issue of access to reliable knowledge and information to be a significant and recurring problem in America's political communication. As related problems, we include the misrepresentation of government actions, policies and commitments, the intimidation of informational agencies, the suppression of reasoned dissent and controversy, news management, political espionage, unwarranted classification of governmental documents, and the misuse and mystification of political discourse. While these problems do not always occupy a high priority of concern with the American public, they continue to undermine the stability and reliability of democratic institutions and procedures.

To correct and avoid such abuses as these, the Committee defends four obligations as implicit in the public commitments of political communicators:

first: investigation--to determine needs and interests which are affected by issues of public dispute.

second: disclosure--to determine the evidence, assertions, definitions, rules, and precedents which pertain to these interests and needs.

third: confirmation--to assure that deliberation and decision-making are guided by the very needs and interests which they affect.

fourth: criticism--to assure that the assumptions and beliefs underlying the decision-making process are subject to reasoned revision; so that future confirmation, disclosure, and investigation are possible.

PRIORITIES:

first: Careful definition and criticism of standards for governmental responsibility in political communication. More specifically, the Committee wishes to encourage creative investigation into the problems of governmental responsibility, and ways for refining the standards of responsibility. This priority should invite attention from rhetorical scholars with interests in reasoned argumentation, requirements for deliberative situations, and issues of rhetorical criticism.

second: Recognition, understanding, and characterization of governmental communication. Both the technology of communication media and the strategies for consciousness--manipulation have proliferated extensively in the past several decades. To explicate and publicize diverse rhetorical strategies of government, to operationalize and quantify the growth and effects of communication technology are tasks demanding the concerted cooperation of rhetorical and communication scholars. What are the dominant characteristics of extended rhetorical strategies for political influence? How have the communications media been adapted to these strategies? What are the immediate, intermediate, and long-range effects of these strategies: in the public's knowledge of political issues, in the public's participation (perceived and real) in the decision-making process, in the stabilization of political attitudes and beliefs? These questions are considered to be priority items on the Committee's agenda. We particularly encourage the development of methods adequate to the complex symbolic dimensions of political communication conduct and their often-unintended implication for our conceptions of American democracy.

third: Application of governmental standards to governmental communication. The delicate machinery of governmental negotiation, decision-making, and policy-implementation underscores the importance of this priority. Governmental responsibilities are broader and more intricate than the reasoned advocacy of fully disclosed and documented positions. The Committee invites discussion of secrecy and other interest-conflicts in governmental procedure.

FUNCTIONS: The Committee expresses willingness to perform a variety of tasks within the organizational structure to SCA, which pertain to ethical problems in political communication.

first: we propose to prepare and examine resolutions bearing upon responsibility in governmental communication, and then channel these through the Resolutions Committee for action at each annual Speech Communication Association convention.

second: the Committee may recommend that the SCA Legislative Council act to support governmental legislation which pertains to political communication practices. The purpose would be to generate and implement standards for the evaluation of political communication strategies and tactics.

third: the Committee intends to monitor and periodically report on statements of public figures: specifically, statements calling to public

attention a standard of responsibility in governmental communication, or statements expressing government policy on public communication. Our purpose would be to inform the SCA of developments which require its attention, to study and explain the communication practices of government, and to initiate resolutions which praise, censure, or qualify relevant positions and agencies of government communication.

3. CREDO for FREE AND RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Recognizing the essential place of free and responsible communication in a democratic society, and recognizing the distinction between the freedoms our legal system should respect and the responsibilities our educational system should cultivate, we members of the Speech Communication Association endorse the following statement of principles:

WE BELIEVE that freedom of speech and assembly must hold a central position among American constitutional principles, and we express our determined support for the right of peaceful expression by any communicative means available to man.

WE SUPPORT the proposition that a free society can absorb with equanimity speech which exceeds the boundaries of generally accepted beliefs and mores; that much good and little harm can ensue if we err on the side of freedom, whereas much harm and little good may follow if we err on the side of suppression.

WE CRITICIZE as misguided those who believe that the justice of their cause confers license to interfere physically and coercively with the speech of others, and we condemn intimidation, whether by powerful majorities or strident minorities, which attempts to restrict free expression.

WE ACCEPT the responsibility of cultivating by precept and example, in our classrooms and in our communities, enlightened uses of communication; of developing in our students a respect for precision and accuracy in communication, and for reasoning based upon evidence and a judicious discrimination among values.

WE ENCOURAGE our students to accept the role of well-informed and articulate citizens, to defend the communication rights of those with whom they may disagree, and to expose abuses of the communication process.

WE DEDICATE ourselves fully to these principles, confident in the belief that reason will ultimately prevail in a free marketplace of ideas.

WSCA notes

Wynn Allen, Chairperson of the Freedom of Speech Interest Group reports the following activities to be held at the Western Speech Communication Association Annual Convention in Phoenix, November 20-23, 1977 at the Adams Hotel.

"FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE"

Chair: Carol K. Bell, Oregon State University
Participants: Ronald Logan, Attorney/Phoenix;
Nancy Hicks, President ACLU Phoenix Chapter;
Ronald Manuto, Oregon State University;
Thurston Doler, Oregon State University.
Time: 830-1030 am Monday, November 21
Place: Navajo "C" - Adams Hotel

Open dialogue with audience following participant analysis.

"BUSINESS MEETING: Freedom of Speech Interest Group"

Chair: Winfred G. Allen, Jr., Ambassador College
Time: 5:30-6.15 pm Monday, November 21
Place: Navajo "B" - Adams Hotel

"COMPETITIVE PAPERS IN FREEDOM OF SPEECH"

Chair: Winfred G. Allen, Jr., Ambassador College
Papers: "Freedom of Expression and the Law Enforcement Officer," Keith Erickson, Texas Technological University
"Sunshine Laws: A Communication Paradox," Timothy Williams, Southern Oregon State College
Time: 2:00-5:15 pm Tuesday, November 22
Place: Navajo "D" - Adams Hotel

W.S.C.A. Freedom of Speech Newsletter
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